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AUTHOR Lombardo, Bennett J.; And Others
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ABSTRACT

Observations were made of coaches' interactive behavior during competitive games, and the quantity and quality of interaction between 38 coaches and their athletes were recorded. Interactions were categorized as: (1) positive--verbal praise, nonverbal affirmative gestures; (2) neutral--lecturing, giving commands, pointing, demonstrating; and (3) negative--verbal criticism, grimacing, frowning. Analysis of the data revealed: (1) Coaches spent approximately one-half of their time observing, absorbed in the action of the game, and not interacting with their players; (2) The most common coaching behavior directed to an individual player was nonevaluative or instructive; (3) Male coaches provided significantly more verbal praise and encouragement than did female coaches; (4) Coaches of winning teams were characterized by greater use of verbal and nonverbal, neutral, and negative interaction; (5) Coaches of losing teams displayed more positive interaction (praise, support) with their players; and (6) Individual interactions occurred most frequently when the score was tied. (JD)

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THE COACH IN ACTION: A DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

Bennett J. Lombardo
Norma F. Faraone
Dorothy Pothier

RHODE ISLAND COLLEGE

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The Coach in Action: A Descriptive Analysis. Bennett J. Lombardo, Norma Faraone, and Dorothy Pothier. Rhode Island College.

The purpose of this study was to describe the behavior of youth sport coaches during regular league play. Coaches (N=38) from various sports were randomly selected for observation. Data were collected using The Lombardo Coaching Behavior Analysis System, a five category observation instrument which provides descriptive data relative to the quantity and quality of the interaction of the coach as well as the target of such behavior. Every five seconds and on every change in behavior observers recorded the nature of the interaction and to whom the interaction was directed. Analysis of the data revealed the following: (1) Approximately 34 percent of all recorded interaction directed to players was positive; (2) Negative interaction (e.g., criticism, sarcasm) occurred at an average rate of 6.78 percent; (3) 30.04 percent of the interaction recorded was directed to one individual; (4) Non-interactive behavior occurred at an average rate of 49.28; (5) Male coaches provided significantly more verbal praise and encouragement than female coaches; (6) The behavior of female youth sport coaches was characterized by significantly greater occurrence of verbal and nonverbal directive (i.e., neutral) interaction with their athletes than male coaches; (7) The behavior of coaches leading teams possessing a winning record at the time of the observation was characterized by greater use of verbal and nonverbal, neutral and negative interaction with their players than coaches of teams with losing records; (8) The behavior of coaches of teams with a losing seasonal record at the time of the observation was characterized by greater use of verbal and nonverbal, positive interaction (i.e., praise, support, and encouragement) than coaches of teams with winning records; (9) Individual interactions occurred more frequently when the score of the game or contest was tied throughout the observation period.

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Bennett J. Lombardo
Health & Physical Education Department
Rhode Island College
Providence, Rhode Island 02908

"The Coach in Action: A Descriptive Analysis"

Bennett J. Lombardo
Norma F. Faraone
Dorothy Pother

Rhode Island College
(Paper Presented at The Eastern District Association Convention, February, 1983, Biltmore-Plaza Hotel, Providence, Rhode Island)

Until recently very little could be stated about coaching with much confidence. The literature related to coaching behavior was replete with sweeping generalizations, non-empirical observations, and anecdotal accounts from selected sport participants. Subjective and personal recipes were often the basis for prescribing coaching techniques.

However, the emergence and widespread use of descriptive analytic techniques has provided the beginnings of a science of coaching, especially related to coaching behavior. In 1979, for example, Smith et al challenged coaches and adult leaders to attend to the enhancement of the psycho-social welfare of participants in sport, based on the results of their observations. With this goal in mind, we offer the results of our work.

The purpose of this study was to describe the behvior of youth sport coaches during league competition. Coaches (N=38) from various sports were randomly selected for observation. Data were collected using The Lombardo Coaching Behavior Analysis System (hereafter referred to as LOCOBAS), a five category observation instrument which has the capability of providing descriptive data related to the quantity and quality of the interaction of the coach as well as the target of such behavior (Table 1).

Every five seconds and on every change of behavior observers recorded the nature of the interaction and to whom the interaction was directed. The average number of tallies/behaviors recorded per observation equalled 616, with a minimum time span of 45 miniutes per observation.

The use of reliability measures is important when multiple observers are employed to code a number of different coaching settings. Interobserver reliability is especially significant when there are large numbers of games, matches, and other athletic events that must be observed for research purposes. With the current emphasis on large scale research into the dynamics of coach-athlete behaviors, the use of only one observer/coder would prove not only too impractical, but also infeasible in terms of time and coding and recording accuracy.

The emphais in LOCOBAS is not on interobserver tally-for-tally reliability, but rather on proportions within LOCOBAS categories and percent data. Several statistical techniques can be employed when establishing interobserver reliability in accordance with each situation. It is important to keep in mind that the selection of a method is dependent upon its simplicity, quickness, and accuracy for the use. Since all of LOCOBAS data are in the form of percent figures, nonparametric techniques are recommended. Such techniques are Scott's Coefficient of reliability, Kendall's Coefficient of Concordance ("TAU" and "W"), and the Spearman Rho Rank Correlation. Interobserver reliability for LOCOBAS, employing Kendall's W (Coefficient of Concordance), with the correction applied for tied rankings, was calculated to be 0.946 (significant beyond the 0.01 level).

The data were presented in two categories: 1) The frequency of occurence of each LOCOBAS category compared against the total number of behaviors recorded for that observation, and 2) The percentage of occurrence of a particular behavior/interaction when compared with behaviors categorized as interaction (e.g., total behaviors minus the total of the non-interactive behaviors, i.e., on-task or off-task behaviors, divided by the total number of tallies recorded.

TABLE 1

THE CATEGORIES OF THE LOMBARDO COACHING BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS SYSTEM (LOCOBAS)

CATEGORIES	VERBAL	NONVERBAL
POSITIVE	Praises, accepts, Jokes, Encourages, Urges on, Provides positive feedback.	Claps, Pats on head, shoulder Laughs to encourage, embraces, Nods affirmatively, raises fist or or fingers in sign of victory.
	((A POSITIVE EVALUATION))	
NEUTRAL	Lecturing, ordering, Directions, Instructions, Gives commands, information giving, shows little interest or emotion.	Pointing, demonstrating, Directing, Motioning, Poker faced, Waving arms to move players, Gives signals, Blank facial expression.
	((A NEUTRAL EVALUATION,ie., an Absence of either a POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE EVALUATION))	
NEGATIVE	Criticizes, Cries, Jeers, Negative Feedback, "BOOS", Bawls out, Screams, Swears, Hisses, Embarrasses Player, Threatens.	Hits, Kicks, Spits, Frowns, Scowls, Grimaces, Shakes Head, Throws Objects, Flails Arms, Shakes the player, Makes Obscene gestures, throws up hands or head in disgust.
	(A NEGATIVE EVAULATION)	

Use the following categories to indicate those instances when interaction is not apparent.

On-task Behavior	No apparent interaction, but coach is obviously involved in the action of the game, the activities of the players,coaches, officials, and fans. Used in instances when coach is not interacting with another individual, yet is still absorbed in the game.
Off-task Behavior	No apparent interaction. The behavior of the coach is off-task, i.e., the coach is performing in a manner unrelated to the action of the game, the competition, and its participants. Employ this category when the coach is absorbed in something unrelated to the action of the game.

TABLE 1 (continued)

The observer utilizes the following symbols to prefix the data recorded in order to indicate the individual(s) with whom the coach interacts:

INTERACTION DIRECTED TO:	PREFIX
Players - Coach's Team	1
Assistant Coach - Coach's Team	2
Game Officials	3
Others	4
Fans, Spectators	
Opposition Player(s)	
Opposition Coach(es)	

Interaction Directed to One Individual

Use subscript "I"

Analysis of the data revealed the following:

1) An average of 49.28 % of all behaviors were categorized as non-interactive. Coaches spent approximately one-half of their time observing, sitting, and pacing. This category was the second most common behavior recorded (47.45 % of this behavior was on-task.

2)Off-task behaviors were observed at an average rate of less than 2% (1.52%) of all behaviors recorded.

3) Interaction directed to fans, opposition coaches and players (i.e., others) was observed at a mean rate of 1.92% of total behaviors and 3.70% of the interaction.

4) Behavior and interaction directed to officials averaged 2.01% of all behaviors and 3.81% of all interaction recorded.

5) Interaction directed to one individual was observed at a mean rate of 15.30% of all behaviors and 30.04% of the total interaction recorded.

6) The most common coaching behavior directed to a player observed was the non-evaluative, directive, or instructive mode of behavior -- approximately 22% of all behaviors and 44% of recorded interaction was categorized in this fashion (TABLE 2).

7) Negative interaction directed to players occurred at a mean rate of 2.59% of all behaviors and 6.35% of interaction recorded (TABLE 2).

8) Approximately 18 % of all behaviors and 34% of interaction recorded was positive. Such positive interaction often took the form of general, non-specific, and unheard (i.e., upon deaf ears) praise, encouragement, and reinforcement.

TABLE 2

USE OF LOCOBAS CATEGORIES

CATEGORY	Percent of all Recorded Behaviors	Percent of Interaction
Player - Verbal		
Positive	9.59	18.67
Neutral	15.43	30.53
Negative	1.29	3.68
Player - Nonverbal		
Positive	8.15	15.62
Neutral	6.87	13.54
Negative	1.30	2.57

9) Positive behaviors between players and coaches occurred at a mean rate of approximately six times that of negative behaviors. Interaction only (i.e., when non-interactive behaviors were parcelled out of the data) revealed a ratio of six positive behaviors/interactions to one negative/critical interaction.

10) Male coaches provided significantly more verbal praise, and encouragement than female coaches. The behavior of female youth sport coaches was characterized by significantly greater occurrence of verbal and nonverbal directive, i.e., neutral interaction with their athletes than their male counterparts (TABLE 3).

11) The behavior of coaches leading teams possessing a winning record at the time of the observation was characterized by greater use of verbal and nonverbal, neutral and negative interaction with their players than coaches of teams with losing recors(TABLE 4).

12) The behavior of coaches of teams with a losing record at the time of the observation was characterized by greater use of verbal and nonverbal, positive interaction (ie., praise, encouragement) than coaches of teams with winning records (TABLE 4).

13) Individual interactions occurred more frequently when the score of the game or contest was tied throughout the observation period (TABLE 5).

The results of this study parallel those of our investigation completed in 1981. It can be stated that coaches closely attend to their tasks and players during competition. They spend almost 50% of their time silently (although not

TABLE 3
THE LOMBARDO COACHING BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS SYSTEM

Gender of Coach

Player - Verbal	Male (n = 21)	Female (n=17)	Mean (N=38)	Sign.
Positive Total Behavior	11.74	6.94	9.59	.05
Positive Interaction	23.10	13.20	18.67	.05
Neutral Total Behavior	12.83	18.64	15.43	.01
Neutral Interaction	26.05	26.06	30.53	.05
Negative Total Behavior	1.01	1.62	1.29	NS
Negative Interaction	1.98	5.79	3.68	NS
Player - Nonverbal				
Positive Total Behavior	9.05	7.03	8.15	NS
Positive Interaction	18.08	12.58	15.62	NS
Neutral Total Behaviors	5.09	9.07	6.87	.05
Neutral Interaction	9.77	18.19	13.54	.05
Negative Total Behaviors	1.21	1.42	1.30	NS
Negative Interaction	2.37	2.83	2.57	NS

TABLE 4

THE LOMBARDO COACHING BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS SYSTEM

Team Record

	Winning Record (n=21)	Average Record (n=9)	Losing Record (n=8)	Mean (N=38)	Sign.
Player - Verbal					
Positive Interaction	18.07	12.75	26.91	18.67	NS
Neutral Total Behavior	15.89	19.84	9.26	15.43	.01
Neutral Interaction	30.95	38.79	20.15	30.53	.05
Negative Total Behavior	1.19	2.02	0.73	1.29	.05
Player - Nonverbal					
Positive Total Behavior	9.29	2.80	11.16	8.15	.01
Positive Interaction	16.29	5.25	25.51	15.62	.01

TABLE 5
THE LOMBARDO COACHING BEHAVIOR

ANALYSIS SYSTEM

Score of Game

Category	Percentage of Behaviors Directed to One Individual (I)	
	Total Behaviors	Interaction
Ahead in Score Throughout Observation (n=11)	12.76	22.69
Change in Score (i.e., Leading to trailing) (n=8)	13.89	29.90
Trailing in Score Throughout Observation (n=7)	12.95	26.21
Tied Score During Observation (n=12)	13.94	39.12

passively) watching the action and observing the play. They rarely engage in off-task behaviors. This apparent total involvement should be comforting and reassurring to all concerned.

Behavior directed to other than their athletes accounts for very little of the coach's time. The message here is obvious -- coaches fulfill their responsibilities to their athletes, with minimal distraction. Notable by its absence was the apparent minimal involvement with game officials, hopefully dispelling this misconception related to the functioning of the coach.

On the other hand, coaches devoted almost 85% of their interactions to players on their team. Of this figure, approximately 30.04% of the interaction was directed to one athlete.

These data not only indicate that the coach is aware of his/her main responsibility but also suggests that personalization and individualization is very much within the reach of the athletic coach. Professional interventions must be made to enhance the attitudes and philosophy of the coaches toward accomplishing truly personal experiences in sport.

When the data is reviewed by gender of the coach different coaching patterns are manifested. More questions are raised here than are resolved. Can we account for these differences by the possibility that female coaches might perceive that their athletes require more direction, possibly because of perceived skill deficiences (when compared with male athletes)? Are female coaches, often newcomers to the coaching experience,attempting to

play the "role" of the coach (i.e., the masculine stereotypical role, as often portrayed in American society), rathe than responding in accordance to the specific needs of their athletes? The motives for such coaching behavior would seem to be a fruitful direction for future research.

There seems to be a relationship between team performance and coaching behavior. Which develops first is the difficult research question? Which influence is greater: the coach's behavior as a factor in the seasonal record, or the team's performance as a shaper of the coach's behavior? A longitudinal study of several coaches throughout an entire season would seem to provide relevant data here.

The score of the game (i.e., the score of the game as the game progresses) has been shown to influence coaching behavior, especially influeincing the target of that behavior. Specifically, there was a significant increase in behaviors and interaction directed to one person when the score of the game was tied throughout the observation period (TABLE 5).

The data related to the occurrence of non-evaluative, directive, and/or instructional behaviors and interaction (i.e., the neutral category) suggests the source of possible conflict within the competitive youth sportscene.

Critics of competitive sport and specifically the youth sport experience in America have often suggested that there is the potential for conflict, that is, between the apparent over-emphasis on winning, performance, and production-oriented sport programs created by coaches and adult organizers on the one hand, and the more personal, subjective objectives of the young participants, e.g., specifically affiliation, enjoyment, participation, and personal relationships, on the other.

The results of this study indicate that coaches apparently are very much concerned with winning and the demonstration of skill and proficiencey, what Dubois termed "product" outcomes (1980). Although there is a widely held assumption that sport contributes in many ways to the educational process, it has been demonstrated repeatedly in studies such as the present one that athletes are rarely provided decision-making opportunities, encouraged to diverge from the game plan and direction of the adult leader, or with the chance for independent thinking or control of supposedly their game.

The results of this study suggest that the athlete's cognitive and affective involvement are not primary goals of the coach. Several recent investigations have suggested that 1) Player-coach interactions are the primary determinants of the ultimate effect sport participation has on children (Smoll and Smith, 1981). 2) The critical coaching behavior relates to the creation of a positive team climate (Fisher, Mancini, et al, 1982). This positive team climate includes an open exchange of the control function, opportunities for athletes to think, analyze, and initiate interaction (versus being passive recipients of the coach's orders). Robinson and Carron (1982) found that:

> Drop-outs from sports experience held the highest perception of the coach as an autocrat, with starters and "survivors" expressing a lower value.(p. 375)

When the results of this study are examined along with other similar studies (Webb, 1969; Snyder, 1970; Chelladurai, 1978), all of which indicate that too often the preferences of the athletes and their personal objectives

related to the sport experience are not congruent with either the goals of the adult sponsor nor in harmony with the environmental-context of the athletic competition, the myth of the youth sport experience is revealed. We do not refer her to negative or critical coaching behavior which, as our studies show,occurs rarely. Rather, we refer to a much more subtle behavior, i.e., the coercion, directing, commanding, ordering, and controlling behavior which predominated in our work.

Adult leaders would do well to consider Coakley's recommendations and restructure the sport experience based on the characteristics of the true "play" experience (1982). In other words, give the game back to the athletes and let them play.

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